

## Older Adults and Fire Safety

Did you know that in the past four years, 14 Montgomery County seniors ages 65 and older have died in fires? Most of those fires took place in the home.

We each need to take steps to prevent and survive a fire. Here are tips from Montgomery County Fire/Rescue:

- **Make an Escape Plan** – Keep a pair of slippers, eyeglasses and flashlight by the bed at night. Plan for two safe ways to get out of each room in your home. Choose a meeting place for your family outside. Once outside, first check to see that all family members are at that meeting place, then call 911 from a safe location. **Never** go back into a burning building for any reason. Practice your plan at least twice a year (perhaps in the spring when you change your clocks to daylight savings time, and again in the fall when you change them back again.)
- **Working Smoke Alarms Can Save Your Life.** – Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on each floor of your home; place other smoke alarms in sleeping and kitchen areas. Test your smoke alarms monthly. Change the battery twice each year when you change your clocks. If your alarms are powered by your home's electrical system, consider installing battery-powered smoke alarms as a back up in case of a power outage.

**Kitchen Fires.** Most kitchen fires come from leaving food cooking on the stove or in the oven. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, take a spoon or potholder with you to remind you to go back to the kitchen. Never cook with loose, dangling sleeves that can easily catch fire. Heat cooking oils gradually. and use extra caution when deep-frying. If a fire breaks out in a pan, put a lid on the pan to cut off air to the fire. Never throw water on a grease fire. Check appliances and their cords for cleanliness and wear and tear.

- **Smoking.** Don't ever leave lit smoking materials unattended. Use "safety ashtrays" with wide lips. Empty all ashtrays into the toilet or a metal container every night before going to bed. Never smoke in bed or when you feel drowsy. Better yet, for your health and safety, give up smoking altogether!
- **Candles.** Keep burning candles out of reach by children and pets; keep matches and lighters out of sight and locked away. Don't ever leave lit candles unattended – especially around children or pets. Keep candles away from draperies or anything that might easily catch fire.

The County has created a Senior Citizen Fire Safety Task Force to look for ways to help people prevent home fires. For more details, go to the Task Force's Website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov). Then click on "Departments," "Fire/Rescue," and then "Senior Citizen Fire Safety Task Force Report" under "News and Events."

For a free home safety evaluation in Montgomery County, call your local fire department.